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AN

INTRODUCTION

TO THE FIFTH EDITION

OF

SOME ACCOUNT

OF THE

SHREWSBURY HOUSE OF INDUSTRY.

PRICE TWO SHILLINGS.

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OF THE

Shrewsbury Houſe of Induſtry.

CONTAINING

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

On the preſent State of the Poor,

AND THE

DEFECTIVE SYSTEM

OF THE

Poor's Laws.

BY I. WOOD.

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INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

PRESENT STATE OF THE POOR,

AND THE DEFECTIVE SYSTEM OF

THE POOR's LAWS.

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS, &c.

So lamentably apparent is the increaſing wretchedneſs of the Poor, notwithſtanding the enormous and growing amount of that legal revenue, which in this nation only is levied for their relief; that many intelligent writers on the ſubject have been led to queſtion the utility of that proviſion. — "The Engliſh plan," ſays Lord KAMES, in his Sketches of the Hiſtory of Man, "beſides being oppreſſive, is groſsly unjuſt: ſhould it be ſuppoſed of ſome diſtant nation, that the burden of maintaining the idle and profligate, was laid upon the frugal and induſtrious, what would be thought of ſuch a nation?" — "So very uſeleſs," remarks the diſcerning HENRY FIELDING, "is this heavy tax, and ſo wretched its application, that it is a queſtion whether the poor or the rich are actually more diſſatisfied; ſince the plunder

of the one, ſerves ſo little to promote the real advantage of the other."

Sir FREDERICK EDEN has with great ability diſcuſſed the queſtion, whether a national proviſion for the poor would be an adviſeable meaſure to be adopted, in a country where no ſuch eſtabliſhment exiſted? and, I conceive, has advanced unanſwerable arguments for deciding it in the negative: but he very properly adds, that "faulty and defective as our ſyſtem may be in its original conſtitution, and in its modern ramifications, he muſt be a bold and raſh projector who ſhould propoſe to level it to the ground." Moſt aſſuredly this parochial contribution could not now be withdrawn, without introducing dreadful miſery and diſtreſs among them. On the other hand, the amount of this tax *has* advanced, and *is* advancing by ſuch rapid ſtrides, that we are loudly called upon by the imperious voice of neceſſity, to ſtem that torrent which threatens to overwhelm the great maſs of the people, in one common ruin.

"That this is the caſe," ſays Mr. RUGGLES, "that the aggregate of miſery is greater among the poor than it was; that the axiom, *it has increaſed, is increaſing, and ought to be diminiſhed,*

diminiſhed, is to the full as true as ever was the ſame axiom when applied to the influence of the crown, no one who ſees their preſent wretchedneſs, and knows the amount of the rates raiſed for their relief, will heſitate to allow; and while this remarkable ſentence is applied to their *miſerable ſituation*, with equal force will it apply to the *revenue* raiſed for their relief."—Hiſtory of the Poor, by T. RUGGLES, Eſq. F. A. S. p. 137.

"Our poor's rates have gone on increaſing with ſuch aſtoniſhing rapidity, as to have doubled their former amount within the laſt twenty years."— Sir F. M. EDEN's State of the Poor, vol. I. preface, p. 25.

"The poor's tax in England, I have no doubt, exceeds Three Millions a year."— Ibid. p. 131, note.

"Amount of money raiſed by Aſſeſſment in England and Wales in

	l.	*s.*	*d.*
1776 - - -	1,720,316	14	7
Medium of money raiſed by aſſeſſment in do. in 1783, 1784, and 1785 - -	2,167,749	13	8."

—Ibid, pages 263, 371.

Certain

Certain it is, that in the preſent ſtate of the public burdens, any further addition to the poor's rates, or even their continuance much longer on the ſcale to which they have already extended, would annually add to the number of the parochial poor, thouſands of honeſt induſtrious families, who have hitherto contributed to their relief; and thus increaſe the demand upon this fund, in the ſame proportion that it diminiſhed the number of thoſe, by whom the increaſing burden muſt be borne.

The dictates, therefore, both of humanity and ſound policy, direct our attention rather to the correction of thoſe abuſes which have been found to reſult from the preſent imperfect ſyſtem, than to the abolition of the tax itſelf; and the grand *deſideratum* is, to render the parochial aid a Stimulus to Induſtry, and not a fund for the Encouragement of Idleneſs, operating as an additional temptation to profligacy and debauchery.

There have not been wanting writers, however, who have boldly defended the preſent ſyſtem, denied the exiſtence of thoſe evils and defects of which it has been accuſed, and ſet their faces as a flint againſt all Reform. Their arguments have indeed been confuted from

from the higheſt authorities, and by the moſt concluſive reaſonings; but as theſe are only to be met with either buried in bulky volumes, or ſcattered through a great variety of ſmaller publications, it may be of conſiderable uſe to collect together, and place in one point of view, the moſt weighty and important of thoſe arguments and authorities to which I refer. When theſe divided rays are thus converged, and brought to unite in one common focus, their combined force will be found to be irreſiſtable.

EXTRACTS.

"It were to be wiſhed, not only that the poor ſhould be ſuſtained, but alſo that the honeſt perſon who has hard means to live, upon whom the poor are now charged, ſhould be in ſome ſort eaſed. And therefore I commend moſt thoſe mixed hoſpitals, where the impotent perſon is relieved, and the ſturdy beggar buckled to work, and the unable perſon alſo not maintained in idleneſs, which is ever joined with drunkenneſs and impurity, but is ſorted with ſuch work as he can manage and perform. — There is a great difference between that which is done by the diſtracted government of juſtices of the peace," (that

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(that is, whoſe minds are diſtracted and diſturbed by the various other objects which in cities and great towns conſtantly demand their attention *) "and that which may be done by a *ſettled ordinance*, ſubject to a *regular* viſitation, as theſe may be." † — BACON.

"The defects of the proviſion made by the 43d of Eliſabeth are, that there is no ſuperintendant power to compel the raiſing of a ſtock where the overſeers neglect it; and *that the act chargeth every pariſh apart, which would not be ſo effectual, as if three, four, five, or more contiguous pariſhes did contribute towards the raiſing of a ſtock, and that there is no power for hiring or erecting a common houſe, which might be uſeful and neceſſary.*" — Sir MATTHEW HALE.

"The multiplying of the poor, and the increaſe of the tax for their maintenance, is ſo general

* "In large populous pariſhes it muſt often be the caſe, that the magiſtrate has neither leiſure to inveſtigate, nor means of aſcertaining, the circumſtances of every pauper that comes before him." —— Sir F. M. EDEN, vol. I. p. 268.

† "When Sir FRANCIS BACON drew up this letter of advice to his maſter JAMES the Firſt, he muſt ſurely have conceived in his mind ſome idea of *incorporated Houſes of Induſtry*." —— RUGGLES.

general an obſervation and complaint, that it cannot be doubted of: the evil has proceeded neither from ſcarcity of proviſions, nor *from want of employment*; and it can be nothing elſe but the relaxation of diſcipline, and the corruption of manners. It may be concluded upon a very moderate computation, that above one half of thoſe who receive relief from the pariſhes, are able to get their livelihood. *An allowance given once a week, or once a month, to the father in money, is not ſeldom ſpent at the ale-houſe, whilſt his children are left to periſh at home, unleſs the charity of neighbours relieve them.*" — LOCKE.

" Whether the employment of the poor *turns to preſent profit or not, is not much material*; the great buſineſs of the nation being, firſt, to keep the poor from begging and ſtarving, *and inure ſuch as are idle to labour and diſcipline, that they may be hereafter uſeful members to the kingdom.*" * — Sir JOSIAH CHILD.

" The cauſe of idleneſs, is the abuſe of the poor's laws we have, and want of better.

* " This maxim deſerves to be written in letters of gold in all work-houſes, houſes of induſtry, ſchools of induſtry, and to be engraved in capitals in the overſeer's books in every pariſh in the kingdom." — RUGGLES.

Our laws to ſet the poor to work are ſhort and defective, tending rather to maintain them in poverty, than to raiſe them to a better way of living; and to render them more bold, when they know the pariſh officers are bound either to provide them work, or to give them maintenance." — CARY.

"The number of poor is occaſioned by thoſe who *will not work*, not by thoſe who *can get no work*." — DEFOE.

"It muſt be matter of aſtoniſhment to any man to reflect, that in a country where the poor are beyond all compariſon more liberally provided for than in any other part of the world, there ſhould be found more beggars, more miſerable diſtreſſed objects, than are to be ſeen throughout all the ſtates of Europe. That the poor are a very great burden, and even a nuiſance to the kingdom; that the laws for relieving their diſtreſſes, and reſtraining their vices, have not anſwered their purpoſes; and that they are very ill provided for, and worſe governed; are truths which every man will acknowledge. Such have been the unanimous complaints of all writers who have conſidered this matter down from the days of Queen Eliſabeth; ſuch is apparently the ſenſe of

of the legiſlature; and ſuch is the univerſal voice of the nation. Every man who hath property muſt feel the weight of that tax which is levied for the uſe of the poor; and every perſon who hath any underſtanding, muſt ſee how abſurdly it is applied." —FIELDING.

"The very law that provides for the poor, increaſes their number: compulſion to relieve, is contrary to the principle of charity, deſtroys gratitude in the receivers, and creates ill-blood, murmuring, and indignation on the ſide of the contributor. The ſhameleſs, the impudent, the idle, the leaſt deſerving, run away with the legal exaction; while the modeſt, the baſhful, and really indigent, are ſuffered to languiſh in the moſt diſtreſsful circumſtances imaginable." — ALCOCK.

"Our poor laws are not only unjuſt and impolitic, but they proceed upon principles bordering on abſurdity, as profeſſing to accompliſh that, which in the very nature and conſtitution of the world is impracticable. They ſay, that in England no man, even though by his indolence, improvidence, prodigality and vice, he may have brought himſelf to poverty, ſhall ever ſuffer want. —Were the proviſion for the poor twice as much as it now is, we

ſhould ſoon find twice the number of poor we now have."—TOWNSEND.

"The defects of the parochial ſyſtem, are the diviſion into pariſhes; the maintaining the poor in ſeparate families; and the annual election of pariſh officers. Every perſon who is elected only for twelve months, will naturally adopt that ſcheme which will give him the leaſt trouble during his office, whatever it may give his ſucceſſor, or however it may affect the public."—Dean TUCKER; who follows up theſe obſervations by recommending an incorporation of ſeveral adjoining pariſhes, under regulations ſimilar to thoſe now adopted in houſes of induſtry.

"Something appears neceſſary to be done for the benefit of the poor themſelves; not by extending the operation of a ſyſtem, which is adverſe, in many points of view, to the exertion of honeſt induſtry, but by checking the too ready encouragement which it offers to idleneſs, improvidence, and immorality."—Sir F. M. EDEN.

"The *poor* pay to the rates for the ſake of the *poorer*, and are themſelves ſinking from want of maintenance and relief.—Notwithſtanding

ſtanding the immenſe amount of the poor's rate, poverty and miſery not only remain, but ſeem to advance, nearly in the proportion that our expenditure increaſes, while idleneſs and diſſoluteneſs of manners go hand in hand, and the next generation promiſes to be worſe than the preſent." — RUGGLES.

"It is a lamentable but generally acknowledged fact, that, although no country in Europe is burdened with half the oppreſſive taxations for the ſupport of its poor, nor can boaſt of half the eleemoſynary inſtitutions projected for their aſſiſtance, as Great Britain — there is no country in which the poor are either ſo numerous, or ſo wretched: — every parochial, and every private effort, ſeems equally to fail in their original and charitable intention." — GOOD.

"It is the dependance upon the poor rates that has occaſioned more poverty, idleneſs, and worthleſſneſs among a particular claſs of people in this country, than in any other. By every attempt at being liberal to the poor (on the preſent ſyſtem) we ſhall render their ſituation more deplorable, and at the ſame time increaſe the public expenſe, and means of peculation. — The powers granted to the overſeer

overſeer are very great — he is authorized to demand any ſum or ſums of money from the pariſh, which he receives and expends, without any *intervening* check or controul. He has not the ſmalleſt inducement from fee, reward, or future credit, to execute the truſt with attention. — To complete this abſurd ſyſtem, the pariſh that is fortunate enough to meet with an overſeer who executes the duty in a conſcientious manner, cannot continue to avail itſelf of his ſervices; but *muſt* change him every other, if not *every* year. There is, therefore, a total want of ſtimulus to exertion, in a ſituation where confidence is given in an unbounded degree." — R. SAUNDERS, Eſq.

"The poor laws of this country, however wiſe in their original inſtitution, have contributed to fetter the circulation of labour, and to ſubſtitute a ſyſtem of abuſes, in room of the evils which they humanely meant to redreſs; and by engrafting upon a defective plan defective remedies, produced nothing but confuſion and diſorder." — Mr. PITT's Speech.

It may fairly be preſumed, that the combined ſentiments of ſo many great men and diſtinguiſhed writers on the ſubject, ſupported as

as they are too by the undeniable fact that the increaſe of the poor's rates, and the increaſing wretchedneſs of the poor themſelves, are both rapidly progreſſive; are ſufficient to eſtabliſh the concluſion, that there do exiſt ſome radical defects in the preſent parochial ſyſtem. What thoſe defects are, may likewiſe be pretty clearly deduced from the foregoing quotations; namely, the *indiſcriminate* proviſion made for *all* the parochial poor; the veſting *annual* overſeers with full powers to adminiſter that proviſion, confiding to men *ſo appointed* the whole management of the parochial fund, and neglecting to furniſh employment for the poor.

It has been contended, however, that the increaſing diſtreſſes of the poor are owing altogether to the advanced price of the neceſſaries of life; while the price of labour, or the wages of the poor, have remained ſtationary. And this opinion has been ſo far acted upon, that the firſt clauſe in the late poor's bill gave to *all* poor families *indiſcriminately*, conſiſting of more than two children, conforming to the proviſions of the act, a right to demand *additional* weekly parochial allowances.

The ſame ſentiment reſpecting the cauſe of the poor's diſtreſs, has alſo been adopted by

by many truly reſpectable writers and individuals, from whom it may perhaps be thought preſumptuous to differ. But this is a caſe of ſo much importance to the welfare of the community, that it ſeems to demand a fair and impartial inveſtigation; and while the diſcuſſion is conducted with good temper, candour, and liberality, it cannot give reaſonable cauſe of offence to any man.—"I have always," ſaid Mr. PITT, "conſidered the ſubject as one of the moſt important that could ever occupy a man's attention; and one that ought not to depend on the opinion or information of one perſon only, but upon the general knowledge, and inveſtigation, of all who chuſe to make it matter of enquiry." *

Whatever be the ſubject, *that* diſcuſſion which has for its ſole object the advancement of truth, is at once pleaſant and profitable. The colliſion of ingenuous minds, excites and emits that ſacred flame, which illuminates every object to which it is directed, and conducts to the higheſt degree of practical improvement. But it is much to be deſired, that all who engage in this diſquiſition, would enter upon it diveſted as far as poſſible of thoſe preconceived opinions and prejudices, which are apt to

* Woodfall's Reports.

to place an undue bias upon the mind, miſlead the judgment, and darken the underſtanding.

The ſituation of the country, or cottage poor, and that of thoſe who are claimants for the parochial proviſion in cities or large towns; is in very many reſpects ſo totally different, I may ſay oppoſite; that the reaſoning which is extremely well adapted to the caſe of the one, by no means applies to that of the other. And to this circumſtance may be attributed much of that difference of opinion which has prevailed among writers on this ſubject. I wiſh ſtrongly to impreſs the conviction of this truth; for unleſs it be ſeriouſly attended to, I humbly conceive, no well digeſted plan for ameliorating their condition, can poſſibly be laid down.

To the families of the cottage poor, a reaſonable allowance of parochial relief, particularly in ſeaſons of occaſional diſtreſs, will undoubtedly *in general* be better adminiſtered to them in their own dwellings. The cottager enjoys the advantage of good air, frequently alſo, of a garden or little croft, if not the benefit of a common, which furniſhes him with many of the neceſſaries of life for the ſupport of his family; and his children are

early employed in various agricultural labours. Neither are theſe poor ſo much expoſed to thoſe temptations, which have been the means of introducing almoſt univerſal depravity and corruption of morals among the town paupers. To compel the former *indiſcriminately* to quit their own dwellings and reſide in a poor-houſe, would be equally cruel and impolitic. But there are too many even of the cottage poor, whoſe habitations are the wretched abodes of filth and miſery; where the children, in conſequence of the idleneſs and profligacy of their parents, are totally neglected, or trained up in the habits of theft and beggary; and where the parochial allowances, inſtead of adminiſtering to the ſupply of their real wants, are devoted to the gratification of their vicious propenſities.—Is it juſt?—Is it politic?—Is it humane, to ſuffer theſe wretches to prey upon the public, and live at the expenſe of the ſober and induſtrious? What law, human or divine, is violated by compelling ſuch characters to labour in a well regulated Houſe of Induſtry for their ſupport, until they manifeſt a diſpoſition to maintain their families by their own exertions?—Is it cruelty, to inſtruct, to clothe, and to employ their offspring in ſuch an eſtabliſhment; to train them up in habits of decency and virtue;

tue; and turn them out into the world at a proper age, with every advantage calculated to render them uſeful members of the community?

And even among this claſs of the poor *in general*, when their families are ſo numerous as to require *conſtant* parochial aid; it would not ſurely deſerve the charge of inhumanity, if the mode of adminiſtering that relief were by taking a part of their children (not into a common work-houſe, but) into ſuch a well conducted parochial ſeminary; where they would be employed according to their age and ſtrength, under the immediate inſpection of a Board of reſpectable Directors, and under ſuch ſettled regulations as would effectually prevent any improper treatment; where they would enjoy the benefit of inſtruction in thoſe ſchools which make a part of ſuch eſtabliſhments, and be brought up in habits of induſtry, cleanlineſs, and decency; allowing at the ſame time mutual intercourſe with their parents and families. The great miſtake has been, to indulge in general declamation; to draw a picture of theſe eſtabliſhments from fancy, and not from actual obſervation; to imagine I know not what ſeverity and inhuman regulations, which I verily believe never took place in any one of theſe inſtitutions; and to conjure up phantoms which never exiſted

but in the wild reveries of a heated imagination.

The writers upon the ſtate of the poor, have almoſt univerſally been gentlemen whoſe attention has been principally directed to the caſe of theſe country paupers; and whoſe ideas of a reform in the poor's laws, and an amelioration of their condition, have conſequently been more particularly applicable to this claſs. Hence the opinion before ſtated, that the diſtreſs of the poor *in general* has ariſen from the circumſtance of their wages not having been advanced, in proportion to the advanced price of proviſions. This, for aught I know, may in ſome parts of the kingdom be really the caſe with the poor peaſants or labourers in huſbandry; and where it is ſo, deſerves all the attention and conſideration which theſe gentlemen moſt humanely plead for. But the augmentation of the legal parochial allowances by a *general* law, applying equally to *all* the poor, and alike enforced in ſeaſons of plenty, and of temporary ſcarcity and diſtreſs; would, ſurely be a very ill adviſed meaſure; operating to increaſe the evils ſo ſtrongly deſcribed by all the writers I have quoted; and founded, with reſpect to a great majority of the parochial poor, in a miſtaken

a miſtaken opinion. By far the larger proportion of theſe, are inhabitants of cities and great towns, and to them the fact does not apply.

It appears from the abſtract of the overſeers' returns to Parliament in the year 1776, as ſtated by Sir FREDERIC EDEN, (1ſt vol. p. 370) that the expenſe of ſupporting the poor for the whole county of Lancaſter, then amounted to 52,220*l.* 0*s.* 11*d.* — The preſent diſburſements for Mancheſter and Liverpool only,* (leaving the towns of Lancaſter, Warrington, Preſton, Wigan, Rochdale, Bolton, Bury, &c. &c. out of the account) will be found, I ſpeak from actual information and printed accounts, to amount to nearly an equal ſum. The expenditure for the whole county of Norfolk, amounted to 64,296*l.* 13*s.* 10*d.*— In 1797, for the city of Norwich only, to 30,245*l.* 9*s.* 11*d.* For the whole county of Warwick, 44,070*l.* 11*s.* 0*d.* — for Birmingham only, in 1796, 24,050*l.* 14*s.* 1*d*½. and I believe it is now above 30,000*l.* The expenditure for that town only, amounted in ten ſucceſſive years, to ONE HUNDRED and SIXTY-TWO THOUSAND FOUR HUNDRED and EIGHTY-ONE POUNDS, THREE SHILLINGS and TWOPENCE; and

* Their diſburſements in 1776, I believe have never been ſtated.

and in this ſhort ſpace the annual expenditure has been more than doubled. Let me here ſtop for a moment, to aſk, whether policy or humanity dictate, that by increaſing the parochial allowances *generally*, this immenſe burden, laid upon the ſober and induſtrious, ſhould be further ſwelled by ſo enormous an addition?

Whatever may be the caſe with the labourers in huſbandry, the wages of the mechanic and artizan, of the ſmith, the bricklayer, carpenter, ſhoemaker, taylor, &c. have been very conſiderably advanced; and the wages of the manufacturer, miner, and collier, have been, and are, upon ſuch a ſcale, as to produce a general complaint, that the great body of them cannot be prevailed upon to work half their time. To add to the parochial allowances of theſe men, experience has demonſtrated, would not contribute to the more comfortable ſupport of their families, or furniſh a ſtimulus to vigorous exertion; but, on the contrary, increaſe their propenſity to idleneſs and diſſipation. The advocates for theſe allowances would alſo do well to recollect, that there is another party equally intereſted — the thouſands and ten thouſands of honeſt, induſtrious inhabitants of our cities and towns, who groan under the preſent burden of the annual tax, and would be undone by any further addition.

Were

Were theſe gentlemen to attend the levees of the overſeer; were they to witneſs the bold and clamorous demands of ſturdy mendicity, habitual intemperance, or improvident ſloth; and inform themſelves to what purpoſes the relief thus extorted was applied: — were they then to accompany the collector of the parochial tax, and behold with what difficulty it is wrung from many an honeſt and induſtrious tradeſman, whoſe family is under the neceſſity of ſubmitting to ſevere deprivations in conſequence of this requiſition: — they would be cured of their ſpurious humanity, and ceaſe to recommend an indiſcriminate increaſe of the parochial allowances. Were they further to undertake a general inſpection of thoſe narrow alleys and miſerable dwellings, where the poor congregate in our cities and large towns; where the pure air is impeded and contaminated with noxious putrid effluvia, and theſe wretched victims of filth and profligacy remain expoſed to every natural as well as moral evil; while their pale countenances and ſqualid appearance, undeniably evince the injurious effects that reſult from this complication of ills: — they would ceaſe their *general* declamations againſt *all* parochial receptacles. I heſitate not to aſſert, that not all the poſitive evils incident even to the common pariſh workhouſes, under the miſerable

miſerable management of *annual* overſeers; will bear a compariſon with thoſe, to which the great maſs of the *town* poor are expoſed in their preſent abodes.——It is ſuch experimental knowledge of the actual ſtate of the great majority of the parochial poor, that alone can point out and lead to the moſt eligible means of ameliorating their condition.

Sanctioned by the foregoing concurring judgment of a BACON, a LOCKE, a HALE, a CHILD, &c. &c. may I not then go on to aſſert, that the remedy to be provided muſt conſiſt in taking the management of the parochial fund out of the hands of annual overſeers; and veſting it in a body of reſpectable governors, acting under ſuch regulations with reſpect to their ſucceſſion in office, as ſhall give them all the advantage of a permanent board: providing for the comfortable ſupport of the aged and infirm, for the proper education of the young poor, particularly thoſe orphans or natural children, who have no other than parochial guardians: and offering to the claimants for the parochial allowances that employment, the want of which is their general, though, in moſt inſtances, fallacious plea, for obtaining the ſame.

With

With regard to the annual overſeers, there appears now to be ſuch a general agreement of ſentiment, reſpecting the pernicious conſequences reſulting from committing the diſpoſal of the parochial funds into ſuch hands; that it ſeems unneceſſary to advance any further arguments in ſupport of my firſt propoſition. An act very lately paſſed, empowers pariſhes to appoint perpetual overſeers with a ſalary; a meaſure ſtrongly recommended by the worthy Mr. SAUNDERS, in his excellent practical treatiſe on this ſubject. But I much fear this would prove at beſt but a palliative, and might, in the hands of artful and ſelfiſh men, aggravate the diſeaſe. The individual, in this caſe, is expoſed to the temptation of acting from perſonal conſiderations; and it is not to be expected that men would generally be found for ſuch ſituations, of ſufficient capacity, enlarged ſentiments, and liberal views. A Board, conſtituted as I have before ſtated, acting upon a regular plan, adopting from time to time ſuch a line of conduct as experience ſhall point out and direct; and meeting weekly to receive the applications of the poor, enquire into the caſes that come before them, and ſuperintend the whole of the parochial concerns; appears to be the beſt calculated for the correction of abuſes; and carrying into effect that regular

ſyſtematic plan, which alone can produce a radical cure for the evils complained of. In the conduct of ſuch a Board, whoſe qualifications are reſpectable, and who act together, no harſh ſeverity or illiberal treatment of the poor is to be dreaded on the one hand, or any improper waſte or abuſe of the parochial funds, on the other.

In *very many caſes*, the aged and infirm poor, particularly thoſe who have outlived their connections, and are left as it were alone in the world, like a withered leafleſs trunk in the midſt of a deſart, can only be comfortably provided for out of the parochial funds, in a poor-houſe. In *no* caſe, can the young poor, abandoned by their parents, or thrown upon the pariſh from their birth, be properly taken care of but in ſuch a receptacle. Indeed the idea of diſtributing the whole of the parochial fund in weekly or other allowances to the poor at their own dwellings, is too abſurd to be ſupported. It would double the parochial expenditure, and multiply all the evils complained of. It is ſurely, then, a great miſtake, to indulge in indiſcriminate abuſe of all ſuch eſtabliſhments. They muſt of neceſſity continue to exiſt, in conjunction with the parochial allowances; and the zeal of the objectors would

would be more uſefully employed, in ſuggeſting ſuch regulations as would correct every abuſe to which they may be liable; and render them at once comfortable aſylums for the aged poor, valuable ſeminaries for the young, and houſes of reformation for the idle and depraved. I ſpeak from experience, when I ſay, that this is practicable.

A much more arduous taſk would be to furniſh employment for the great body of the poor. This has long been attempted by annual overſeers without *permanent* ſucceſs. The exertions of worthy and enlightened individuals, have indeed been attended with very important and valuable *temporary* advantages.* But it is very mortifying to obſerve, that their negligent, obſtinate, or ignorant ſucceſſors, have frequently in one ſhort year wholly counteracted all their zealous and ſucceſsful labours, and deſtroyed their faireſt hopes.

To eſtabliſh parochial manufactories throughout all the pariſhes in the kingdom for the employment of the poor at large; and eſpe-

 cially

* See Mr. SAUNDERS's Treatiſe, of which I cannot ſpeak in terms that would adequately expreſs my eſteem of his laudable and judicious exertions.

cially under the care and management of annual wardens or managers, ſubject to the direction and *controul* of any two viſitors;—I ſpeak with all due deference when I ſay—would, in my humble apprehenſion, prove a moſt expenſive and ruinous undertaking. But it is conſolatory to obſerve, that providing on this extenſive ſcale for the general employment of the poor, does not appear to be neceſſary. And here it is, that experience holds forth information of the higheſt importance. Moſt true is the obſervation of DEFOE, that the large number of thoſe poor who hang upon the parochial proviſion, is occaſioned by thoſe who *will not work*, not by thoſe who *cannot procure it*. The comparatively ſmall quantum of employment provided in the Houſes of Induſtry eſtabliſhed by incorporated pariſhes, has been found ſufficient to check the frauds and impoſitions of thoſe, who upon this pretence laid claim to the parochial allowances.

Having at different times undertaken the management of liberal ſubſcriptions for the purpoſe of ſupplying the poor in our united pariſhes at Shrewſbury with proviſions at half price, during ſeaſons of particular ſeverity; I directed

directed books to be opened, in which were regularly entered the names of thoſe who applied for the benefit of theſe benevolent contributions. In order likewiſe to proportion the quantum of relief to their reſpective exigencies, particular pains were taken by the parochial committees, to ſtate from perſonal inſpection the number each family conſiſted of. By this means I have been enabled to aſcertain, that the whole amounted at leaſt to ſeven thouſand.* Yet out of this large body, the average annual number of poor in our Houſe of Induſtry, has never reached four hundred; more than one third of whom have been children. The number, therefore, of thoſe for whom we have found it neceſſary to provide employment, has been ſmall indeed, when compared with the aggregate of our parochial poor. The fact is, that the great body of them, now finding that, by the natural operation of a regular ſyſtem, the door is ſhut againſt fraud and impoſition; that their idle excuſes are of no avail; and that thoſe who are able, muſt work, or ſtarve; have choſen rather to labour for themſelves than for the Houſe of Induſtry: and they have found alſo,

* Including the whole of the incorporated pariſhes, one of which is a country pariſh.

alſo, that thoſe who are diſpoſed to work will ſeldom ſtand in need of employment. This is a moſt important fact, and leads to concluſions of infinite moment, with reſpect to the moſt eligible plan for correcting the abuſes of the preſent ſyſtem, and ameliorating the condition of the poor. One inference is ſo apparent, that he who runs may read it; namely, that we do not compel all our poor to come into the Houſe, when they ſtand in need of parochial aſſiſtance. *Occaſional* relief has been, from the firſt opening of the Houſe, always adminiſtered to them at their own dwellings: and, in thoſe caſes which require *continued* aſſiſtance — WE DISCRIMINATE. This is the grand hinge upon which every plan of parochial reform ought to turn. Indiſcriminate allowances, and indiſcriminate confinement to a Poor-Houſe, are equally abſurd and injurious. But an eſtabliſhment providing employment for thoſe poor, and thoſe only, who cannot, or will not procure it; a Houſe of Induſtry, with ſpacious airy apartments, kept ſtrictly clean, and under regulations that enforce moderate labour, ſobriety, decency, and good order; where the aged poor are treated with tenderneſs, and the young trained up in habits of diligence, and inſtructed in the principles

ciples of religion, morality and virtue; I will venture to affirm, is the *germ*, from whence all improvement in the parochial ſyſtem muſt originate. Away then with all that vague declamation, all that *indiſcriminate* abuſe, which has been heaped upon theſe inſtitutions. It does not apply. — It is a caricature, that diſtorts their every limb and feature; and converts their fair and comely proportions, into uncouth and monſtrous forms; — gorgons and chimeras dire! — They are not thoſe "ſlaughter-houſes," thoſe ſeats of a "government more deſpotic, than any that prevails between Gambia and the Ganges," which miſtaken men have deſcribed.

Entertaining, as I moſt firmly do, ſuch ſentiments of the great importance and utility of theſe eſtabliſhments when properly conducted; and confirmed, as I am, in thoſe ſentiments, after taking no ſmall pains to inform myſelf of all the objections that have been advanced againſt them; I cannot refrain from expreſſing myſelf thus warmly on the ſubject. But that this may not appear to reſult from that fond predilection all men are prone to entertain for their own opinions, and the favourite objects of their purſuit; I feel it to be neceſſary to advert to thoſe objections, and ſtate

ſtate ſuch replies as have operated to the entire conviction of my own mind, after having honeſtly endeavoured to diveſt myſelf of every prejudice and prepoſſeſſion. Whether they will have the ſame effect upon my readers, I preſume not to determine; nor have I a wiſh that they may make any further impreſſion, than they may derive from their intrinſic weight in the ſcale of ſound reaſon and impartial judgment.

It has been alledged, that where the poor are crowded together in theſe houſes, the effect muſt be prejudicial to their health.

Whatever might have been the caſe in the infancy of theſe eſtabliſhments, the objection does not apply to any of thoſe erections that are of recent conſtruction. They are built upon a large ſcale; in eligible, airy ſituations; the apartments are lofty and well ventilated; the poor are well fed; and obliged to conform to thoſe regulations which enforce ſobriety, cleanlineſs, and decency; they have medical aſſiſtance when ill, and a diet adapted to their complaints. Can it be conceived, that in ſuch ſituations they are liable to equal mortality, as in their own filthy, confined, and miſerable dwellings? *particularly the*

town

town poor. I beg leave here to quote a paragraph from one of my former publications. "The average number of poor in our Houſe for the laſt year has been 340; the number of deaths 29. If it had been 30, it would have been one in $11\frac{1}{4}$; of theſe 29, two were ninety years old; three, eighty; ten, upwards of ſeventy; five fell victims to venereal habits; one died of a cancer; one a maniac; and one a poor vagrant, who had been ill treated in a country pariſh." I inſert this quotation for the purpoſe of inferring therefrom, that no fair or juſt inference can be drawn from the proportional number of deaths in a Houſe of Induſtry, reſpecting their general effect upon the health of the poor. "The poor," ſays Mr. RUGGLES, "who take refuge in a Houſe of Induſtry, are ſo reduced by poverty as not to be able to maintain themſelves and their families; conſequently, the conſtitution, both of parents and children, muſt have been debilitated by want of neceſſary food, &c. ſo that none can be ſaid to be admitted in ſound health; no eſtimate can therefore be made of their chance of life, in compariſon with the inhabitants of villages, towns, or cities in general." Mr. HOWLETT, the ſtrenuous oppoſer of theſe eſtabliſhments, has admitted, that "as theſe places are the

common receptacles of the aged, the infirm, and the diſtempered, the general mortality may be conſiderably higher than what takes place among the poor at large, without the ſmalleſt imputation upon their ſalubrity. No fair compariſon," he admits, "can be inſtituted but with reſpect to the children."

In my correſpondence with that gentleman I ſtated, that out of 91 born in the Shrewſbury Houſe, two only had died therein, and two more out at nurſe, all at the age of two months; two or three more at the age of three or four years, but after they were taken out of the Houſe. Upon acting again in the Direction, I found reaſon to apprehend, from omiſſions in other parts of this record, that the regiſter had not been accurately kept; and upon the change of our houſe-ſteward I cauſed a freſh book to be opened, containing a regiſter of births and deaths *only*; (before, it included other particulars:) and I can now ſtate with perfect confidence, from my own perſonal inſpection and attention to the accuracy of this regiſter, that from the 10th of December, 1798, when it was firſt opened, up to the 23d of December, 1799, twenty three children have been born in the Houſe, only one of whom has died. In a majority of the houſes enumerated by Mr. Ruggles, the mortality has been upon a ſmaller

ſcale

ſcale than even in the Shrewſbury Houſe; and in thoſe of the others where the greateſt mortality prevailed, it is recorded that it was in conſequence of ſmall pox, or epidemical fever.

It has been urged that the inhabitants of theſe houſes are in a dreadful ſituation, when any infectious diſorder breaks out among them. — By no means ſo bad an one as in their own crouded and miſerable dwellings *in our towns*. But this objection is completely obviated by providing a detached building, or lazaretto, at a ſufficient diſtance from the houſe to prevent the communication of the diſeaſe. This makes a part of the Shrewſbury Eſtabliſhment, and ought to be attached to all others. With reſpect to the ſmall pox, we always inoculate at regular ſtated periods, and have very rarely loſt a ſingle patient.* This concluſion then appears to me to be undeniable — that if due care be taken in their conſtruction, (which may be provided for by law) and due attention paid to cleanlineſs; the natural operation of theſe Eſtabliſhments, inſtead of increaſing mortality among the poor, will be to reſtore health, and prolong life.

* The children of the out-poor are at the ſame time inoculated in their own dwellings; I mean thoſe of them whoſe parents chuſe to take the benefit of this proviſion.

It is *poſſible*, indeed, that by not proportioning the ſcale of the building to the number of its inhabitants; and by crouding them into ſmall, cloſe, and dirty apartments; a Houſe of Induſtry *may* be rendered a miſerable Hoſpital, increaſing wretchedneſs, and generating diſeaſe. But are we from hence to infer, that the Inſtitutions themſelves are pernicious? and that the aged and infirm poor, the natural and orphan children, together with thoſe whom the labour of their parents cannot ſupport; the ſturdy mendicant likewiſe, and the idle, vicious profligate, who extorts the parochial relief under the fallacious pretence that he cannot procure employment, and then applies it ſolely to the gratification and indulgence of his intemperance and exceſs; that all theſe different claſſes muſt continue to be conſigned to the common pariſh work-houſes, where it is generally impoſſible to enforce cleanlineſs and decency; and where all the evils complained of are multiplied a hundred fold? Or, are we at once to ſhut up all theſe receptacles, and allow all theſe claimants on the parochial bounty to live at large on weekly ſtipends; and purſue no meaſures calculated to improve their morals, to check their numberleſs frauds and impoſitions, and compel thoſe who are able, but idle, to labour for their

their ſupport? Are we quietly to ſit down lamenting all the evils which notoriouſly exiſt, and daily multiply, in the parochial ſyſtem; and the growing burdens of the parochial taxes, increaſing in their amount as we have ſeen in nine years, from 1776 to 1785, nearly half a million per annum; and from 1785 to the preſent time, *another million per annum more?* *— It is ſurely ſufficient barely to ſtate theſe queries, in order to point out the weakneſs and abſurdity of that general declamation which has been directed againſt theſe eſtabliſhments. It has been demonſtrated, by actual experiment, that they *may* be rendered ſalutary receptacles for theſe different claſſes of the poor; would it not then be a much more uſeful employment, to point out ſuch regulations, and ſuggeſt ſuch meaſures of precaution, as may check or prevent thoſe evils, to which, in common with all other human inſtitutions, they may be expoſed?

Another objection, that has been laid hold of for the purpoſe of diſplaying the talents of theſe writers in pathetic eloquence, has been, the cruelty of compelling the poor to abandon their own dwellings, and "enter into

* Sir F. M. Eden, vol. I. page 25, 131 note, 363 and 371.

into theſe legalized priſons; ouſting them from thoſe *cottages*, where, in the humble pride of domeſtic authority, in the endearments of family union, in a property from joint labour, and in freedom of perſon, they ſeemed to diſſolve the old alliance of wretchedneſs and poverty." —If ſuch were indeed the inevitable conſequence, or is in any inſtance the authorized abuſe, of theſe eſtabliſhments, I ſhould freely abandon them to all that execration they would deſerve. But theſe gentlemen are ſurely not aware, that policy at leaſt, if not humanity, muſt operate upon the Directors of theſe Inſtitutions, in direct oppoſition to ſuch a practice. If the poor *cottager*, —that I may argue the point with theſe gentlemen on their confined and limited view of the parochial poor —if the poor cottager, in a ſeaſon of temporary diſtreſs, applies only for *occaſional* relief; it is not for the intereſt of the pariſh, or incorporation of pariſhes, to compel him and his family to come into the Houſe, for the purpoſe of being entirely ſupported at their expenſe. It appears from the great body of information collected by Sir F. Eden, that much clear profit is not to be expected from the manufactures of a poor houſe. Such a ſucceſſion of imperfect workmen, taken, as they ought to be, and are, *from* this employment,

ment, as ſoon as they are able to earn their own ſupport, cannot be expected to render a manufactory a profitable concern. I acknowledge, I had once more ſanguine expectations on this head. It will always therefore be for the intereſt of ſuch eſtabliſhments to allow *occaſional* relief to the poor at their own dwellings.

The benefit derived from furniſhing employment for the poor, is obtained in a different way.—It operates as a powerful check to the frauds and impoſitions of the out-poor. And here, the advantage is very great indeed. In the beginning of the year 1798, I received an application from the united Veſtries of the Bath Pariſhes to viſit them, for the purpoſe of communicating to them any information in my power, reſpecting the eſtabliſhment of a Houſe of Induſtry, which they had then in contemplation. They furniſhed me with the parochial accounts of the preceding year, and I attended ſome of their work-houſes on the pay-days. I was aſtoniſhed at the general appearance and deſcription of thoſe poor who received weekly allowances. It appeared from their accounts, that the *total* amount of their joint diſburſements (excluſive of the pariſh of Walcot) was 286*l.* 3*s.* 3$d\frac{1}{2}$. *more*, than thoſe of the united Pariſhes at Shrewſbury the year

of

prior to the eſtabliſhment of our Houſe of Induſtry; but their diſburſements to the out-poor, amounted to 3111*l.* 6*s.* 10½*d.* while ours, for the ſame year, 1797, did not amount to 500*l.**

Yet,

* See Addreſs to the Bath pariſhes, printed by CRUTTWELL, and ſold by DILLY. Undoubtedly, if a Houſe of Induſtry had then exiſted at Bath, a part of the difference between the two ſums ſtated, would have gone to defray the increaſed expenditure of their poor-houſe; the family in which would have been enlarged by the admiſſion of a certain proportion of their weekly penſioners. It is not reaſonable however to preſume, that under the preſent defective ſyſtem (which diſables them from adopting a regular plan for the employment of the poor) the ſame abuſes and impoſitions do not take place at Bath, which have been allowed to exiſt everywhere elſe. Indeed, from my own perſonal obſervation and enquiry, I cannot myſelf poſſibly entertain the ſmalleſt doubt of it. The labour of their poor in the houſe would alſo have contributed towards the expenſe of their ſupport. And from the operation of theſe joint cauſes, together with the other œconomical regulations adopted in Houſes of Induſtry, I am fully perſuaded that a moſt important ſaving might have been effected. I never yet met with a place, where the labour of the female poor could be employed with more advantage to the pariſhes, or leſs expenſe in providing the neceſſary materials, than at Bath.——I add this note, from a ſincere deſire to guard againſt deceiving by any fallacious ſtatement, which on the preſent ſubject would deſerve the moſt ſevere reprobation.

There

Yet, to the out-poor in caſes of real diſtreſs, our allowances of occaſional relief *at their own houſes*, are upon a much more liberal ſcale, than when it was obtained from the annual overſeers. — Can there be a more ſtriking, or more convincing proof, of the great advantage reſulting from being able to hold out employment to poor applicants; or, in conſequence, of the great benefit and utility of theſe Eſtabliſhments?

With reſpect to the applications both for this *occaſional* relief, and for more *permanent*

There are no vagrants more completely verſed in the *ſcience* of beggary, than thoſe who frequent the ſtreets and avenues of Bath. A poor miſerable looking wretch petitioned a gentleman one day, while I was there, for a recommendation to the infirmary. She took this recommendation to a public houſe, where ſhe got her belly full of meat and drink; and then tendering bad ſilver to pay the publican, left her recommendation in pawn, whilſt ſhe pretended to go for the purpoſe of getting her money exchanged. Another gentleman coming down Hollow-way in the duſk of the evening, overheard the following converſation: — "Well, Jack! what luck to-day?" — "D——d bad, I have only got three ſhillings." — "I have done better, look here is ſeven and ſixpence; come, we'll go and have an alderman." The gentleman's curioſity was ſo much excited, that he ventured to aſk what they meant by an alderman? — "An alderman, ſir," ſays the fellow, "why it is a boiled turkey and oyſter ſauce."

aſſiſtance, as I before obſerved, the Directors DISCRIMINATE; that is, they allow to the former that aſſiſtance which they judge the reſpective circumſtances of each caſe requires; and to the latter, either relief at their own dwellings, or admiſſion into the houſe. If aged paupers have children or friends diſpoſed to take proper care of them, and are arrived at the decline of a life ſpent in honeſt induſtry, they allow that aid to their friends which enables them to paſs the evening of their days in *thoſe* dwellings, and *that* ſociety, which long habit and tender connections have endeared to them. If they are without ſuch kind friends, and incapable of taking proper care of themſelves, they are taken into the houſe, where they are treated with tenderneſs, and aſſiſted by nurſes, appointed for the apartments in which they are placed.

I truſt my readers will now give me credit for the aſſertion, that this DISCRIMINATION forms the grand hinge, upon which every plan of parochial reform ought to turn. And in whoſe hands can it be ſo well, or ſo ſafely placed, as in thoſe of a Board of reſpectable directors, meeting weekly to take into conſideration the caſes of the poor applying for relief? Such a line of conduct obviates all

all the objections that have been brought againſt theſe eſtabliſhments, and demonſtrates, that true policy and humanity, both require that they ſhould be duly *regulated*, but by no means *aboliſhed*; and that, *ſubject to ſuch regulations*, every poſſible public and parliamentary encouragement ought to be held out to them.

One *general* rule of the Shrewſbury Inſtitution, though ſubject to the ſame *diſcriminating* application, may perhaps at the firſt glance appear exceptionable: I mean, that of relieving large families, by taking a part of the children into the houſe. But this is not that kind of ſeparation, which diſſolves the endearing ties of parental and filial connection; any further than they are diſſolved when youth are boarded at a ſchool for education. The parents are allowed to viſit them, and they may viſit their parents; at leaſt weekly, for they leave off work every Saturday afternoon at three o'clock. They are alſo allowed ſtated holidays, which they may ſpend at home. Here then alſo, *regulation*, and not *abolition*, is the proper meaſure. Yet, though the indulgencies I have ſtated will ever remain in uniſon with the tender chords of humanity; the rigid moraliſt may be diſpoſed to plead

in this caſe, for a more compleat ſeparation. The ground-work, he may urge, of all reformation among the parochial poor, muſt be laid in education. Among the *town-paupers*, the great majority are diſſolute and depraved. To allow then of this mutual and continued intercourſe, is to counteract all the pains that are taken in the parochial ſeminary to eradicate bad habits and principles, and plant good ones in their room. In deciding on this intereſting queſtion, the heart and the head of the benevolent man, may poſſibly be at variance. Perhaps it is wiſeſt, to allow a reſpectable board to exerciſe their own diſcretion.

If this important branch of parochial reform remain wholly unattended to, what is to be expected but that a total diſſolution of all principle, and a general depravity and corruption of manners, will take place in this numerous and important claſs of the community? "*A fortiori*," ſays Mr. RUGGLES, "the children of thoſe who receive their maintenance from the property of the State, are the children of the State. Government has an undoubted right, on every principle of nature and juſtice, to direct in ſome meaſure the education of thoſe children, whoſe parents are chargeable to ſociety. — Induſtry, early induſtry,

induſtry, keeps the riſing age from preſent miſchief, and faſhions the future man to a life of honeſty; and depend upon it, the religious principle, together with every reſpected moral virtue, may be reared on the baſis of habitual induſtry. — How excellent muſt that plan be, which would comprehend, and in a manner inſure, the future well-being of ſo large a portion of this nation; would deliver them from a childhood and youth, paſſed in idleneſs and theft; to a manhood formed from the earlieſt years to habits of induſtry?" This reaſoning applies equally to *Houſes* of Induſtry, as to *Schools* of Induſtry; and, I humbly conceive, with much more force to the former than to the latter; ſince the probability of a reform in their principles and manners, is much greater when they are not in the way of imbibing daily, both from precept and example, the vicious practices of their depraved progenitors.

It has been objected, that "the powers veſted in the Directors of Houſes of Induſtry, are thereby wreſted from the old deſcription of officers — mayors, juſtices, and overſeers." —What are thoſe powers? — Has not the magiſtrate ſtill authority to interpoſe and redreſs any well-founded complaints? Has he ever been accuſtomed to direct the preciſe quantum of parochial

parochial relief that ſhall be granted to each applicant? Is it poſſible, that a mayor or juſtice in a populous city or town, ſhould attend to the daily exerciſe of ſuch a power? Have they ever been in the habit of ſo doing? Has not the individual overſeer, in ninety-nine caſes out of a hundred, acted according to his own caprice or diſcretion, in the diſtribution of the parochial fund? and is not the abuſe of that diſcretion the ſubject of univerſal complaint? The aſſertion with reſpect to the magiſtrate, is not founded; with reſpect to the overſeer, it is. But to whom is it transferred? — from the individual overſeer to a board of twelve or twenty Directors, whoſe qualifications, in point of fortune, *muſt be reſpectable*, meeting weekly to inveſtigate each caſe that is brought before them; and acting to every intent and purpoſe as a body of overſeers. And may not all the power that is veſted in the Board of Directors, be as ſafely lodged in their hands, as in that of any individual? The only authority they ſolicit beyond that of the old overſeer, is that which is neceſſary for the good government of the houſe; and to their honour be it recorded, that ſince the firſt eſtabliſhment of houſes of induſtry, *the rigid and ſtrict ſcrutiny of their inveterate oppoſers, has not been able to point out a ſingle inſtance*

of

of their abuſe of that power. But, — "they have been allowed to inflict corporal puniſhment." — They will have no objection to give up that power. Its only object was, to enforce that good order and ſubordination, without which, three, four, or five hundred parochial poor, forming one family, could not be prevented from rendering it a ſcene of wild uproar, riot, and confuſion. To prevent, however, the bare poſſibility of abuſe, let the offenders be conſigned to the authority of the magiſtrate. Yet, if I am not miſtaken, this power was allowed, and exerciſed, in the old Work-houſes, under the old parochial laws. I beg leave here to refer my readers to the opinions of Sir FRANCIS BACON, and Sir F. M. EDEN, reſpecting the government of the magiſtrate, as quoted in page xii. But,—"the overſeers are ſubject to fines, while to the Directors, it is ſtated, this proviſion does not attach." — How ignorant is this objector, of the laws by which houſes of induſtry are governed? No director can retire, or remit his attendance at the weekly boards, without ſubjecting himſelf to a heavy fine; renewable for every renewed offence. — "Reſpectable gentlemen," it is ſaid, "may grow weary of a duty they are not *compelled* to perſevere in; and then, unlettered and inferior perſons will probably

probably creep into the direction, who, from defect of judgment, or want of principle, will fatally derange the fancifully perfect eſtabliſhment." — Again this objector is grievouſly miſtaken. Each director is *compellable* to ſerve, when returned by the pariſhioners, and elected out of thoſe returns by the exiſting board; as well as *compellable* to perſevere in that ſervice, during his period of acting. — "Inſtead of providing better for the poor," it has been ſaid, that "the operation of houſes of induſtry tends to augment their diſtreſſes, by adding to the powers of taſk-maſters, and introducing a ſyſtem of coercion that muſt degrade, debilitate, and unnerve them for every deſirable, ſocial, or political purpoſe." — If to compel the idle, profligate, and abandoned, who clamouroufly demand and extort the parochial allowances, drawn out of the pockets of the ſober and induſtrious, to moderate labour, ſobriety, and decency, *be* a ſyſtem of degrading coercion, then indeed houſes of induſtry muſt plead guilty to this high-ſounding charge. But even in that caſe, as ſoon as theſe peſts of ſociety feel themſelves diſpoſed to labour for their own ſupport, they obtain their emancipation, and have free leave to quit theſe "dreadful priſon-houſes." And, whether a ſyſtem, whoſe natural tendency is, to correct

their

their vicious propenſities, and induce habits of induſtry and decorum, be *indeed* a ſyſtem of degrading coercion, the natural tendency of which is to debilitate and unnerve them, the candid reader will determine. This, and ſeveral other ſimilar objections, proceed upon the miſtaken idea, that the plan of theſe eſtabliſhments is "to force all claimants into one place." This indeed would be a "radical objection:" but my readers muſt have ſeen how miſerably miſtaken theſe objectors are, in their crude ideas of the ſyſtem by which Houſes of Induſtry are conducted.

Another objection of much more ſeeming plauſibility is, that theſe parochial houſes, where the profligate and depraved, the vagrant, and the abandoned female, form ſo conſiderable a part of the family; muſt of courſe be very improper ſeminaries for the education of the young poor: and that it muſt be a dreadful puniſhment to the modeſt and deſerving pauper, to be conſorted with ſuch companions. — This depends upon regulation. The working rooms, the dormitories, the ſchools, the tables at which they dine, and even the ground where our young poor are allowed to amuſe themſelves in the open air; are all detached from thoſe occupied by

the other paupers. A complete ſeparation of the ſexes takes place among all but the married poor. They are ſeparately claſſed in the dining hall, their ſitting rooms are at oppoſite ends of the houſe, and they aſcend to their dormitories by ſeparate ſtair-caſes. The bed-rooms are always locked up during the day. The women of bad character, are now, to my unſpeakable ſatisfaction, placed in a detached building at a bow-ſhot diſtance from the houſe, with which they are not allowed any communication. In addition to theſe precautions, the ſituation of the poor in the houſe compels ſobriety and diligence. They have proportionate allowances from the amount of their earnings, to encourage them to induſtry; but thoſe allowances do not put it in their power to indulge in intemperance and exceſs. Prayers are read morning and evening in the dining-hall before breakfaſt and ſupper, and they are obliged to retire early to reſt. The aged, and more reſpectable poor, are accommodated by themſelves, in a ſitting room and ward for the men, and others for the women, each attended by a nurſe, and kept perfectly clean and decent. Prophane and immoral diſcourſe, riotous and diſorderly behaviour, are ſtrictly prohibited; and the offenders puniſhed, in the firſt inſtance, by being

being deprived for a limited time of their gratuities; and for repeated offences, by ſolitary confinement; * while on the other hand, diligence and good conduct are rewarded by diſtinction of dreſs, and other douceurs. It is very true, that if all the parochial claimants were compelled to come into the houſe, it would be difficult, if not impoſſible, to counteract their vicious propenſities. But the deſerving poor, receiving temporary and occaſional relief in their own dwellings; and the diſcipline I have deſcribed operating as a powerful diſcouragement to the vicious and abandoned, who cannot bring themſelves to ſubmit to a life of ſobriety, induſtry and decorum, the *ſettled* reſidents are either children, the aged and infirm, or the modeſt, but unfortunate, incapable of labouring for their own ſupport. The adults are all diſcharged, upon application to the board, when they can maintain themſelves; and the children, (except thoſe that are cripples, idiots, or diſtempered,) are regularly apprenticed out, when they arrive at a proper age.

Such is the great importance of regulation, and ſuch the ineſtimable advantages

 reſulting

* Not to be continued for each offence, above a ſingle day.

reſulting from DISCRIMINATION, in the diſtribution of the parochial allowances.

May I now be permitted to call upon the enemies of theſe eſtabliſhments, to point out a plan, by which the parochial fund can be applied with more beneficial appropriation to the relief of its proper objects; or to the advantage of the young poor: or, by which, a more effectual check can be interpoſed, to the frauds and impoſitions of the idle and undeſerving.

And by a ſteady, uniform perſeverance in ſuch a line of conduct, great pecuniary advantages *may* alſo be derived to incorporated pariſhes from theſe inſtitutions. This brings me to the laſt objection of any moment that occurs to my recollection.

It has been ſtated, that "inſtead of relieving the induſtrious part of the community, or abating parochial burdens; they tend greatly to injure the one, and *inevitably* to add to the other in an alarming degree: and that though at firſt they appeared to ſucceed to admiration, they are no longer thought to anſwer the good ends expected from them."

They are ſuppoſed to "injure the induſtrious, by interfering with their reſpective employments." But ſuppoſing that all poor-houſes

houſes were aboliſhed, muſt not their preſent inmates, either execute an equal quantity of work, or be maintained in idleneſs at the expenſe of the induſtrious? And has it ever been found in a ſingle inſtance, that the work executed in a houſe of induſtry, *has* injured the employments of the poor in their reſpective vicinage? The effect with us is directly the reverſe. We put out flax for the poor to ſpin at their own houſes, which, with our woollen yarn, is manufactured into linſeys for the cloathing of the family: and thus our manufactory, ſo far as that article extends, inſtead of interfering with, furniſhes employment for, the out-poor: and thereby precludes the neceſſity of ſupporting them in idleneſs.

It is a more ſerious objection, that ſome of theſe eſtabliſhments "do not now ſucceed to that admiration, which was the caſe at their out-ſet." But here, the objectors have held up a very partial view of the matter.* The houſes at Melton, Greſſinghall, Heckingham, Tatingſtone, &c. are pointed out as "weighty warnings, ſtrongly inforcing the propriety of rejecting any attempt to eſtabliſh ſimilar

* I beg here to be underſtood as not alluding to Sir F. M. Eden, whoſe candour, liberality, and diſintereſted zeal, very far tranſcend my feeble praiſe.

ſimilar inſtitutions:" but no notice is taken of the much larger number of thoſe houſes that have ſucceeded, and are in the actual poſſeſſion, and enjoyment, of the moſt important advantages.

At Blything, a Debt of 12,000l. has been paid off, and at the ſame time the poor's rates reduced one eighth.

At Mutford & Lothingland, } 6200l. borrowed, 2000l. paid off, and the rates remain as in 1781, when they were advanced ten per cent. but 300l. of the debt is paid off annually.

At Wangford, 4000l. debt paid off, number of poor in the houſe about 200, yet their annual income from rates, but 1750l.

The hundred of Samford, } 2450l. of debt paid off, and the rates remain as in 1766.

The hundreds of Boſmere & Claydon. } 7294l. of debt paid off, the rates remain the ſame.

The hundred of Coſford, &c. } The original debt of 8000l. reduced to 180l. the poor's rates reduced three-eighths, and a conſiderable fund in hand.

The

The hundred of Stow. } 1500l. debt paid off, the rates remain now the ſame as at firſt.*

The Pariſh of St. John's, Southwark. } The concerns of the poor in this pariſh, have been conducted for the laſt twelve years by a board of directors or governors appointed by a ſpecial Act of Parliament; and the pariſh is ſo populous, that under this management, it may be regarded as perfectly ſimilar to the incorporations which take place in houſes of induſtry. When their Act was obtained, the poor's rates were as high as ſix ſhillings in the pound, with a debt of five or ſix hundred pounds. The rates have never ſince exceeded half a crown.†

At Shrewſbury. Extract of a petition from the inhabitants of Shrewſbury to Parliament, in 1796. "In the purchaſe of the neceſſary lands, buildings, implements, and machinery, for our Houſe of Induſtry, there has been expended near eight thouſand pounds. By means of this eſtabliſhment, the aged and infirm poor have been comfortably provided for; the young trained up in habits of induſtry and decency; a ſtop has been put to the great frauds and abuſes that prevailed in the parochial

* RUGGLES.

† See Mr. SAUNDERS's Obſervations, page 170.

parochial expenditure; and thoſe poor who laboured under temporary diſtreſs or diſability, have been more liberally aſſiſted and relieved in their own dwellings, than was before found practicable.

" And while the poor themſelves have derived theſe important benefits from this inſtitution, your petitioners have alſo been very conſiderably relieved from the heavy and growing burden of the parochial taxes; the poor's rates for theſe united pariſhes, having, ever ſince the commencement of this undertaking, been reduced upwards of one-third: the amount of which reduction, in the term of twelve years ſubſequent to this eſtabliſhment, being nineteen thouſand three hundred and fifteen pounds thirteen ſhillings and ſixpence. And this very conſiderable reduction has taken place, notwithſtanding the farther charge of more than two thouſand pounds upon the ſaid rates, for the erection of bridges thrown down by violent inundations, the maintenance of the families of men ſerving in the militia, and the parochial levies for the army and navy. We are well convinced that theſe combined and ineſtimable advantages, have ariſen from the good management of the Board of Directors, appointed under the ſpecial Act granted for this Eſtabliſhment. The qualifications

qualifications required have rendered that Board reſpectable; the number of Directors ſecured the advantage of combined judgment and due deliberation; effectually prevented the abuſe and oppreſſion of the poor; and, from the particular form of their conſtitution, enabled them to act with the advantage of practical knowledge and experience in the duties of their office.

Your petitioners therefore pray, &c. &c."

After enumerating the particulars I have ſtated reſpecting all the Houſes of Induſtry herein mentioned, except thoſe in Southwark and Shrewſbury; Mr. RUGGLES proceeds to contraſt the comfort and benefits enjoyed by their poor inhabitants, with the ſituation of the ſick cottager, and the miſerable pauper in a pariſh work-houſe; and then ſtates the three following important queries, reſpecting Houſes of Induſtry.

1. Have theſe inſtitutions amended the morals of the poor?

2. Have they tended to diminiſh the burthen of expenſe to ſociety attending their relief and maintenance?

3. Have they increaſed, or do they decreaſe, the chance of human life?

The firſt query, he ſays may be anſwered in the affirmative without a poſſibility of contradiction: and ſtates that the proportional few inſtances of indictments for acts of inferior criminality, prove the fact in a remarkable manner, as does likewiſe the general good order and regulation of the labouring poor in the incorporated diſtricts, together with their reſpectful and civil behaviour to their ſuperiors, and the very rare inſtances of the commiſſion of thoſe petty theſts ſo generally frequent among the children of the cottage poor.

The ſecond query, — Whether Houſes of Induſtry tend to diminiſh the expenſe of the relief and maintenance of the poor? he conſiders likewiſe as decided in the affirmative, after fully and fairly ſtating the good or the bad ſucceſs of all of them. And here he introduces the following very important remarks, as applicable to this intereſting queſtion.

That, when the average at which theſe pariſhes ſettled their rates at the time of their incorporation, and the number of years that has ſince elapſed, are conſidered; and compared with the advance of the poor's rate during this period throughout the kingdom in general, and

and the county where theſe houſes are ſituated in particular, (which he proves, in an inſtance perfectly applicable, to have been 25 per cent.) it will be found that the moſt unthrifty management (ſuch as in the inſtances quoted by the objectors) has been in fact a ſtate of poſitive proſperity, and reduction of expenſe; and that even in thoſe inſtances, the revenues of the houſes are increaſing beyond their diſburſements, the debt is diminiſhing, and the rates will fall, even below that low medium they have hitherto preſerved, which rates, had there been in thoſe places no houſe of induſtry, would probably have riſen 25, or even 50 per cent.

Here, then, this important query might be allowed to reſt, confiding in the deciſion of every candid and impartial enquirer.

But it ſeems proper to advert a little more particularly to thoſe inſtances where ſucceſs has not been ſo conſpicuous or permanent. They do indeed furniſh "important warnings," but of a different nature to thoſe ſtated by the objector. — They point out the bad conſequences that muſt enſue from relaxing in that regular attendance, and attention, which will ever remain a neceſſary and im-

portant part of the Director's duty.* In every caſe, ſucceſs is apt to beget confidence, and blind ſecurity: theſe are commonly followed by careleſsneſs and neglect; and ſuch is the nature of theſe eſtabliſhments, that this will ever be ſucceeded by a diminution of thoſe advantages, which continued vigilance would have inſured. Another very great miſtake is apt to creep into the management of theſe inſtitutions. After ſucceſſive years of proſperity, it is *preſumed*, that the advantages have been principally owing to the good conduct and management of the officers and ſervants employed. This produces implicit confidence, —an error pregnant with the moſt pernicious conſequences. By degrees, every thing is ſuffered to fall into the hands of theſe domeſtic officers, who never fail to improve the advantage, till they have wreſted from the Board the whole internal government and management of the houſe. Then, relaxed diſcipline, and increaſed expenditure follow of courſe; and with theſe, a rapid declenſion of every advantage which *had* been acquired, and *might* have been rendered permanent and ſecure. "When the Directors become careleſs," ſays the excellent M. VOGHT, in his account of the Hamburgh Inſtitution, "the whole

* See Appendix.

whole adminiſtration falls into the hands of under officers, who afterwards know ſo well how to embroil the buſineſs, that no ſubſequent Director is ever able to unravel the clue."

But this evil is not peculiar to theſe eſtabliſhments. *All*, of every nature, and every kind, are alike expoſed to it. And as well may it be ſaid, that the beſt concerted plan of police ought not to be adopted, becauſe individual magiſtrates *may* neglect to enforce it; as that theſe eſtabliſhments ought not to be encouraged, becauſe particular boards *may* become remiſs in the diſcharge of their important duty.

By judicious regulations, matters may be ſo ordered, that the duty of a Director may be fully diſcharged in the ſhort ſpace of four or five hours per week, during the time of his acting in the direction; and what man is there ſo loſt to all ſenſe of his duty as a member of ſociety, ſo little impreſſed with a conviction of the intereſting and beneficial conſequences that will reſult from the faithful execution of a well concerted plan, for improving the morals, and ameliorating the condition of the poor, as to neglect any ſingle

ſingle opportunity of devoting ſo ſmall a portion of his time, to a purpoſe ſo unſpeakably important?

The hours which the Director thus employs, will tell well, when he himſelf comes to make up his laſt account.*

I cannot here reſiſt the ſtrong inclination I feel, to do juſtice to the conduct of a gentleman at preſent in the direction for the Shrewſbury Houſe. The pariſh in which he reſides nominates one perſon annually of the eight returned to the board, out of whom four are choſen to ſucceed to the direction. Though not neceſſary, it was very properly thought a piece of reſpect particularly due to this gentleman, to wait upon him previous to the parochial nomination, and ſolicit his conſent. With that zeal for the public welfare, which has ſtrongly marked the whole of his conduct through life, he very readily complied with their requeſt; and had no ſooner entered into the direction, than he diligently applied himſelf to obtain every information reſpecting the ſtate and concerns of this eſtabliſhment.

The

* With reſpect to Mr. RUGGLES's third query, I have in the preceding pages argued the point at large.

The board were ſoon after indebted to him for a moſt admirable report, which is recorded in their journals. His attendance at the weekly boards is exemplary; and the whole of the united pariſhes are under the higheſt obligations to him, for his zealous ſupport and co-operation in the reform of thoſe abuſes, which, in conſequence of a very miſtaken, implicit confidence in the domeſtic officers of the houſe, had crept into the management of its internal concerns. That enlightened judgment, and ſteady zeal, which enabled him to conduct the affairs of a very important and extenſive province of the Britiſh Empire, with ſuch ſingular felicity, as to obtain the united applauſe of men who widely differed in their ſentiments and views, and which has been deſervedly crowned with the general admiration and eſteem of his country; has been applied with peculiar advantage, to promote the proſperity and ſucceſs of this valuable eſtabliſhment. — The gentleman to whom I allude, is Sir CHARLES OAKELEY, Bart. late Governor of Madras.

When men who have ſo honourably diſtinguiſhed themſelves in the ſervice of their country, thus employ the hours of their retirement from public ſtations; — it is an injury to

to ſociety; — it is incompatible with every noble and generous principle; not to hold up ſuch characters for general imitation, as well as general eſteem. The modeſty which always accompanies genuine worth, will, I fear, take offence at an effuſion that comes warm from a heart free from the bias often attending perſonal obligations, or ſelfiſh views. — The only apology I can offer is, that I ſtrongly felt the propriety, and poſſible utility, of this feeble tribute, in connection with what I had before ſtated; and, — that the impulſe was irreſiſtible.

There is another important queſtion, which, though it ſeems to have eſcaped obſervation, deſerves however to be very ſeriouſly attended to: and that is, — Whether Houſes of Induſtry are equally eligible for an incorporation of country pariſhes, as they are for thoſe of towns? They have certainly ſucceeded, as we have ſeen, in ſeveral of the Suffolk diſtricts, to a very high degree; and will no doubt ſucceed, wherever they are properly conducted and attended to. There are, however, peculiar advantages attending an incorporation of the town pariſhes. The Directors are nearer at hand, and can more conveniently attend the weekly Boards, than in the country, where

where they may have ſeveral miles to travel: a circumſtance eſpecially inconvenient in the winter, and which may at all times prevent that regular and conſtant attendance that is ſo eſſential. When the diſtrict or incorporation is of conſiderable extent, it may be uſeful to provide a larger, or even a double number of Directors, who may attend by rotation; taking care, however, that the whole of the acting Directors do not retire at once, but that one half of them remain, to furniſh thoſe who come in with the neceſſary information. That is, if the acting number be ten, for inſtance, five of them only ſhall retire at the ſtated periods, and five others enter upon their rotation.

The cottage-poor, *generally ſpeaking*, are not in every reſpect ſuch eligible objects for a Poor-houſe, neither are the numbers of thoſe claſſes or deſcriptions which form our inmates, ſo conſiderable in the individual pariſhes. To bring together three, four, or five hundred of them, may require a very large extent of diſtrict, which will be liable to the inconvenience reſpecting attendance at the Boards, both to the Directors, the Overſeers, and the paupers themſelves, that I have juſt adverted to. It is likewiſe in cities and towns that the frauds and impoſitions of the parochial poor more

particularly prevail; and there, of courſe, the advantage reſulting from the check given to thoſe practices by the regulations of a Houſe of Induſtry, operate in every reſpect to much more advantage. At all events, it may be proper and neceſſary, to adopt in ſeveral reſpects ſuch local regulations, as are particularly adapted to the reſpective ſituations of each incorporated diſtrict.

ON THE RELIEF OF THE POOR, IN SEASONS OF PARTICULAR DISTRESS.

I have frequently heard it ſuggeſted, that the moſt eligible mode of relieving the *induſtrious* poor,* when their diſtreſs ariſes from an extraordinary advance in the price of neceſſaries, would be by levying an extra, or additional parochial aſſeſſment, during ſuch emergencies. But this idea appears to me pregnant with the moſt ſerious evils.

In the firſt place, it would gradually undermine, and ultimately extinguiſh, that cardinal virtue, by which this country is ſo glorioufly diſtinguiſhed. Upon the ſame principle, the like fund ought to be reſorted to, for the ſupport of all our hoſpitals, and other charitable inſtitutions. — To heal the ſick, to ſet

* I do not here mean the claſs of common pariſh paupers.

ſet the fractured limb, to pour the freſh inſtruction o'er the mind, — are not more neceſſary and important acts of charity, than to feed the hungry, or clothe the naked: but, would this forced loan, this extorted relief, wrung in ten thouſand inſtances from the hand of poverty itſelf, deſerve the appellation, or be entitled to the glorious rewards of charity? Would it operate, — as that godlike virtue does, — to expand the heart; to harmonize the affections; to humanize the temper; and to unite man to his fellow man, by that three-fold cord, that ſacred band of union, which conſtitutes the grand cement of ſociety? It may be ſaid, that opulent and benevolent individuals would ſtill have it in their power to contribute in aid of this fund by their voluntary donations. But when once this principle was reſorted to, a thouſand plauſible pretences would operate to diſcourage, or diſincline individuals, from contributing theſe auxiliary aids.

In the ſecond place, this mode of raiſing a fund for ſuch purpoſe, would be compelling the *poor* to contribute for the relief of the *poorer*. It would be a dreadful aggravation of the evils which already exiſt, from the enormous amount of the parochial aſſeſſments. It

would be levied at thoſe times, when the preſſure of the preſent burthen is peculiarly felt; and when the poor's rate, or the expenſe of relieving the parochial poor, is unavoidably, and very conſiderably increaſed, without this additional drain upon it.

Finally, it would deſtroy among the induſtrious poor themſelves, a principle that is of infinite value and conſequence to ſociety. There yet remain among the labouring poor, a numerous body who feel a laudable ambition to ſupport their families, without having recourſe to parochial relief. In common ſeaſons, their exertions are ſucceſsful; and in times of ſcarcity, with the aid of theſe benevolent contributions, they contrive to ſubſiſt alſo, without giving up that independent ſpirit, which prevents them from hanging upon the parochial fund. But if once this ſpirit is broke in upon, and ſubdued; if ever they are compelled to claſs among the pariſh paupers, all their reluctance will vaniſh, and this ineſtimable principle will preſently diſappear.

There could not be a more injurious, impolitic, or ruinous meaſure, than a law for the general, indiſcriminate increaſe of the parochial

parochial allowances.* Already, they deſtroy that ſtimulus to exertion, which ought to exiſt among the labouring poor; and every legal increaſe of thoſe allowances, would proportionably increaſe this evil propenſity. The meaſure I am oppoſing, would operate preciſely in the ſame manner. It would take away that generous and animating motive, which rouſes the labouring peaſant and artizan to active induſtry; and encourage that idleneſs, which, in this claſs, is invariably followed by the abandonment of *all* principle, and which leads directly to profligacy, wretchedneſs, and ruin.

ON THE LAW OF SETTLEMENTS AND REMOVALS.

In addition to theſe general obſervations, I beg leave to add a few remarks on the law of ſettlements and removals; that fruitful and perennial ſource of parochial litigations. With reſpect to the former, I preſume not to be a competent judge. It appears to me, however, to be an evil, neceſſarily attaching to the parochial proviſion, though if it be poſſible to ſimplify that law, it were a conſummation devoutly to be wiſhed.

With

* See page xxvi.

With regard to removals, ſeveral humane and valuable regulations have lately been enacted; but I humbly conceive that there ſtill remains a further proviſion, which would be highly ſalutary and beneficial. If the pariſh to which a pauper's family is removed, ſee cauſe to apprehend that the ſettlement is not with them, but in a *third* pariſh, ſtill they are obliged in the firſt inſtance to appeal againſt the order of removal: and this brings on an expenſive litigation between two pariſhes, to neither of whom, it often turns out, the family belongs. Why may not the pariſh removed to, be allowed to remove again to a third pariſh, without proſecuting ſuch an appeal? It may be replied, that the *third* pariſh may ſee cauſe to appeal, and the poor family be haraſſed by removals ad infinitum. But in a great number of inſtances this would not be the caſe, and all litigation be avoided; in many others, the diſpute would ultimately reſt between the two pariſhes where the actual ground of doubt exiſted; and the firſt pariſh, in which there was no pretence of ſettlement, would be exonerated. Such checks and regulations might likewiſe accompany the alteration propoſed, as would prevent any abuſe proceeding from it. As for example, that the removal, without appeal from the order, ſhould ceaſe

ceaſe with the third pariſh; or, that a diſcretionary power be veſted with the magiſtrates to decide upon the propriety of a further removal, without appealing from the firſt order. A caſe in point, will ſhew the neceſſity of ſuch a regulation.

A brick-maker brought a numerous family to reſide in Shrewſbury, in order to obtain employment. Being an idle, drunken raſcal, he preſently deſerted his family, and left them chargeable. Conſiderable expenſe was incurred by ſending a conſtable in purſuit of him with a warrant, and bringing him back. The family were then removed by an order, to the pariſh where he ſwore his ſettlement to be. As ſoon as they arrived there, he told the officers that if they would allow him five guineas, he would take his family away and put them to no further expenſe. They acquieſced in his propoſal, and he came back to Shrewſbury in a very few days. Before the Shrewſbury pariſh could apply for a paſs to return them, notice of appeal againſt the order was given. A ſeſſions trial enſued, and the order was reverſed, upon proof that there were ſtronger grounds of ſettlement in a third pariſh; the court alſo ordered to the appellants, together with

with the uſual coſts, that they ſhould be reimburſed the five guineas advanced by them to the pauper. Enquiry being then made in the third pariſh, they alſo declared their determination to appeal againſt any order of removal to them, and ſtated very probable grounds in ſupport of their reſolution. Here then, an expenſe of upwards of thirty pounds was incurred by the Shrewſbury pariſh, to which the pauper came a ſtranger, and had never done any act or deed, whereon the ſmalleſt pretence whatever could be grounded, for his ſettlement therein. Had the appeal been at iſſue between the ſecond and third pariſhes, the queſtion would have been tried between the parties where the real ground of doubt lay, and the ſecond pariſh been put to no more expenſe, than they incurred by their appeal againſt the Shrewſbury order.

The law which requires that a pariſh ſhould ſend an overſeer with the paupers when removed by an order, is likewiſe productive of immenſe expenſe and inconvenience. A reſpectable tradeſman, who leaves his buſineſs and travels acroſs the kingdom with a pauper's family, expects to receive a conſiderable compenſation; and I do not know of any law ſettling the allowance he ſhall be entitled to

to claim. If I miſtake not, there was a clauſe to that purpoſe inſerted in the firſt printed copy of a late bill, but afterwards expunged, for what good reaſon I cannot conceive. There was alſo a clauſe in the late overſeers' bill, empowering magiſtrates to ſend any perſon they thought proper to appoint, with the paupers removed; but this alſo was objected to, and ſtruck out. Surely, the beadle of the pariſh, or any proper perſon appointed by the magiſtrates, might convey the paupers with as much effect, as a pariſh overſeer: and might be employed for that purpoſe at much leſs expenſe. Indeed, when the removal is beyond a certain diſtance, I humbly conceive it would be a much more eligible mode to convey them from conſtable to conſtable — as by a Paſs. The law has now provided, that they ſhall not be removed till they become actually chargeable, and thereby guarded againſt frivolous and vexatious removals; but as the poor in general reſort to towns for the ſake of employment, it is throwing a very unequal burden upon the town pariſhes, to compel them to remove in ſuch caſes, in ſo very expenſive a manner: and it would be very much for the benefit of all towns, to unite their intereſt in obtaining a more equitable regulation.

The proviſion for ſuſpending Orders of Removal during the ſickneſs of a pauper, and charging the pariſh removed to with the expenſe incurred in parochial relief during that interval; is at once humane and equitable. — What a pity it is, that it ſhould have opened a door to the moſt ſcandalous impoſitions! Theſe might be conſiderably checked, by requiring the magiſtrate to call from time to time for profeſſional information upon oath reſpecting the ſtate of the pauper; and directing him to certify by indorſement on the back of the order, his allowance of weekly relief, together with the period of its commencement and ceſſation.

The late reſtrictions reſpecting Paſſes, are likewiſe productive of many injurious conſequences. No perſon can be removed by a Paſs, unleſs an act of vagrancy be proved, when he muſt firſt be ſent to the houſe of correction and puniſhed. How are pariſhes to proceed with the families of Iriſh or Scotch paupers? No Order of Removal can be obtained, becauſe they have no parochial ſettlement; or if it could, the expenſe would be enormous. When in diſtreſs, they muſt be relieved, and very properly, as caſual poor. But are the pariſhes where they fall into this predicament,

dicament, particularly by the death of the parent, to be for ever burdened with their ſupport? It has been urged, that as towns, in ſuch caſes, have enjoyed the benefit reſulting from the pauper's labour and reſidence, it is reaſonable that they ſhould bear the burden which may ariſe from the maintenance of the family. But this reaſoning is fallacious. In a very great majority of theſe caſes, the parties are itinerant paupers, who ſeldom reſide long in the ſame ſituation. And what proportion does the benefit, reſulting from a few months labour and reſidence, bear to the expenſe incurred by having a numerous family ſaddled upon the pariſh in perpetuity? Here alſo, a caſe in point will ſtrongly mark the abſurdity of this regulation.

An honeſt fellow with a family, who had been thirty years in the army, and was diſcharged upon account of ill health, with a certificate of good behaviour, came to reſide in Shrewſbury with his wife and children, for the purpoſe of procuring employment. He met with an accident *ſoon after*, that diſabled him, and was very deſirous to return to his native place and connections in Scotland. He applied to the magiſtrate for a Paſs, but was told he could not obtain one, unleſs he had

committed an act of vagrancy, for which he muſt firſt have been ſent to priſon. — The brave veteran replied, — "I am no vagrant;—I have ſupported my family as long as I was able; — I have ſerved my country for thirty years, and was never once puniſhed for miſconduct; — I will not now go to priſon as a criminal, without having committed any fault; but (and his faultering voice betrayed his inward anguiſh,) my penſion will not ſupport my young family." —— I happened to be preſent on this occaſion, and truſt my readers will give me credit for my indignant emotions. — I may be wrong, but I would, in ſuch a caſe as this, have braved all the conſequences of tranſgreſſing the *letter* of the law, convinced that I ſhould not have infringed upon the *ſpirit* of it. It never could have been in the contemplation of the legiſlature, to have reſiſted ſo reaſonable an application: and never was there a more ſtriking inſtance of the truth and importance of that ſage maxim, *Summum Jus eſt ſumma Injuria.* In many other caſes, the natural operation of this ſevere reſtriction will be, to increaſe parochial litigations: an evil already of too great magnitude. In 1776, it amounted to an expenditure of 35,072*l.* 0*s.* 8*d.*: in 1785, to 55,791*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.* per annum. Paſſes I am told *may* be appealed

appealed againſt; Orders of removal (where there is good ground for appeal) *muſt*. In the former caſe, the true place of ſettlement is always found out without litigation; and an appeal againſt a Paſs has ſcarce ever been heard of. The reaſon is, that the pariſh which paupers are paſſed to, may upon good grounds remove them by an Order, to their real ſettlement, without being compelled to appeal againſt the Paſs; and thus, where any real cauſe of doubt ariſes, the queſtion is agitated between thoſe pariſhes only, where that cauſe exiſts. It might be provided, that paupers ſhould never be paſſed from a pariſh where there was any ground of ſettlement; but that when there was no ſuch ground, when the paupers were become actually chargeable, and when the place of ſettlement was in another county, Paſſes ſhould be allowed.

FRIENDLY SOCIETIES.

The ineſtimable advantages which may be derived from benefit clubs, or friendly ſocieties, are ſo obvious, that it is ſcarce neceſſary to enlarge upon them. They counteract the pernicious tendency of the parochial relief. While the latter manifeſtly encourages idleneſs

neſs and diſſipation; the former operates as a ſtimulus to frugality and induſtry. The lower claſs have little proſpect of being able, *individually*, to lay by a comfortable proviſion for a time of ſickneſs or old age. But by entering into ſuch ſocieties, they *may* ſecure theſe ineſtimable advantages. How lamentable then is it, to ſee theſe valuable inſtitutions perverted and abuſed! Yet ſuch is really the caſe; and the general prevalence of theſe abuſes, if not timely checked, will certainly operate to their total extinction. It has been thought neceſſary for the encouragement of theſe voluntary contributions, that each ſociety ſhould have the privilege of enacting their own bye-laws, which they may amend, alter, or repeal. And the conſequence too frequently is, that the young members contrive to ſecure a majority, by virtue whereof, they enact freſh bye-laws that totally abrogate all the benefits, to ſecure which theſe ſocieties were originally inſtituted. When the old members become numerous, and are compelled to draw upon the fund for their ſupport; the young ones grow diſſatisfied, and either agree to ſhut up their box, that is, for a time diſcontinue all allowances to their ſick and diſabled brethren; or, to diſſolve the ſociety, and divide the capital among the exiſting

ing members. Hence the averſion of the artful and deſigning, to regiſter their aſſociations, which would enable the magiſtrates to check their miſconduct. The natural conſequence of theſe abuſes is, that the ſober and induſtrious are diſcouraged from entering into theſe clubs. Too commonly alſo, their little capital is waſted by improvident purchaſes, or by being put out on bad ſecurities.

It ſurely would be a moſt deſireable object to place theſe ſocieties on ſuch a footing, as would ſecure to all their members the benefits they propoſed to themſelves, by devoting a part of their weekly earnings to the eſtabliſhment of theſe funds: and I know of no method by which the liberal and benevolent can ſo effectually, or with leſs danger of perverſion, under proper regulations, contribute to the general comfort and happineſs of the great family of mankind.

It certainly would be found policy, to furniſh aſſiſtance out of the national fund for making good deficiencies, and enabling theſe aſſociations punctually and honourably to fulfil all their engagements. It would connect them with the conſtitution and proſperity of their country, by a combination of the moſt powerful ties that

that can operate upon the mind of man. To the parochial allowances, the poor themſelves do not contribute. If theſe were to be encreaſed ten-fold, they would only become more eager to obtain them; and, if their moſt unreaſonable demands were not complied with, would feel no other emotions than thoſe of reſentment and diſcontent. But in the fund of a friendly ſociety, the ſubſcribers would all have a perſonal intereſt. They would feel their obligations to that Conſtitution, which encreaſed and gave permanency to its beneficial ſtipulations; and, in caſe of neceſſity, would contend earneſtly for the preſervation and ſecurity of that capital, to which they themſelves had been the principal contributors; and that parent ſtate, to whoſe foſtering bounty they were ſo much indebted.

Providing additional means of gratification to the idle and depraved, would be to adminiſter fuel to their outrageous paſſions, and to augment their inſatiable cravings. The more they thus acquired, the more ripe they would become for riot and revolt. But, holding out ſuch a premium as I have propoſed for the encouragement of provident induſtry, would not only ſecure the affections of thoſe who *are* provident and induſtrious, but furniſh a moſt powerful inducement for *all* to become ſo.

And

And at all events, eſtabliſh ſuch an intereſt among the great maſs of the people, as would oppoſe an inſurmountable barrier againſt the open attacks of foreign, or the inſidious encroachments of domeſtic foes.

It is by ſuch a chart alone, that a good pilot will wiſh to ſteer the veſſel of the ſtate. And where ſuch a band of union ſubſiſted between the governors and the governed, provided it was not counteracted by thoſe wild ſchemes of ambition or tyranny, which endanger all property and perſonal ſecurity; but, on the contrary, ſtrengthened and cemented, by adopting that line of conduct which demonſtrated that the *Salus Populi* was regarded and acted upon as the *ſuprema Lex:* a people thus united, would, with the bleſſing of Heaven, become invincible.

If ſuch aſſiſtance were afforded to theſe *voluntary* aſſociations, (for I do not plead for a compulſory law to enforce ſubſcriptions) the public would have a right, by a general act, to enjoin thoſe regulations, which would effectually prevent the abuſes I have ſtated. In the mean time, were perſons of fortune to become annual ſubſcribers, they alſo would thereby ſecure the power of ſettling thoſe arti-

cles and conditions, by which each reſpective ſociety they ſubſcribed to ſhould be invariably governed: and their ſubſcriptions, if the practice became general, would have a ſimilar operation to eſtabliſh ſuch a fund, as would be adequate to all the claims that might be juſtly made upon it.

It has been apprehended, that ſuch an interference would excite jealouſy, and prevent thoſe, for whoſe benefit theſe clubs are intended, from entering into them. But I cannot think that this would be the caſe. The object which every ſober and induſtrious man has in view when he becomes a member, is to ſecure that proviſion in time of ſickneſs and old age, which is the profeſſed deſign of theſe aſſociations: and to every ſuch man, it would be an additional inducement to be aſſured that he ſhall not be diſappointed. He will alſo have the further encouragement of obtaining, by means of ſuch liberal aſſiſtance from thoſe who do not intend ever to draw upon the fund, a more conſiderable allowance in time of diſtreſs, than he could otherwiſe have enjoyed. At the ſame time the laudable ſpirit of independence would be ſufficiently gratified, by the circumſtance of his having obtained a claim

claim to theſe allowances, in virtue of his own regular contributions.

Were the repreſentatives of the people to allow an extraordinary intereſt on the capital advanced by theſe ſocieties; and at the ſame time to provide in the moſt ſolemn manner poſſible, by a general law, for the ſecurity of the funds ſo veſted; I humbly conceive that the moſt important advantages would be derived from the meaſure: and that, whatever jealouſy or ſuſpicion might for a ſhort time take place, it would very ſoon diſappear. The benefit would be immediately felt by the increaſed allowances; and this circumſtance would greatly contribute to excite general confidence. My opinion in this reſpect, is in ſome degree ſanctioned by experience. The Directors of the Shrewſbury Houſe were early aware of the great advantage which would be derived from theſe inſtitutions; and with a view to their encouragement, they offered to take their capitals at a higher rate of intereſt than they could then otherwiſe procure; giving them transferable bonds, pledging their eſtate, and the poor's rates, for the amount of the ſums ſo advanced. At firſt, a natural jealouſy was excited; but the punctual payment of their intereſt as ſoon as due, and

of the principal likewiſe, whenever it has been demanded, together with the advantage derived from the higher rate of intereſt, has in a great meaſure removed every ſuſpicion; and applications are now frequently made from theſe ſocieties, tendering the ſurplus of their little funds. Theſe are always complied with, and if the money is not wanted, the bonds of other creditors to the ſame amount, are taken up.

I beg leave here to recommend the plan of the ſociety at Caſtle Eden, as ſtated in that very valuable publication, the "Reports of the Society for bettering the condition of the poor." The truſtees are the Lord of the Manor, the Clergy and Juſtices. All annual ſubſcribers of one guinea and upwards, are honorary members. Twelve of the principal inhabitants, together with the honorary members, are Directors for the time being. A committee, with a treaſurer, ſteward, and clerk, are elected annually: Alſo, two viſitors from each pariſh. Donations, as well as ſubſcriptions, are received.

NATIONAL BOARD.

I moſt cordially concur with Mr. Saunders, in his recommendation of an eſtabliſhed national

national board, for attending to the concerns of the parochial poor. This Board ſhould be empowered to demand from all the pariſhes in the kingdom, an annual ſtatement of the amount of their poor's rates, and parochial diſburſements, claſſed under all the heads and ſubdiviſions neceſſary to furniſh complete information. They ſhould alſo collect accounts of the various friendly ſocieties, the number of their members, the amount of their weekly, monthly, or annual ſubſcriptions; of their allowances to the ſick and diſabled members; the number of years they have been eſtabliſhed, and the ſtate of their funds. They ſhould likewiſe be authoriſed to call for a liſt of all parochial charities, and required to keep an exact regiſter of the ſame in their books of office. They might be inſtructed to collect and arrange an account of the various plans that have been ſucceſsfully adopted with regard to the diet, dreſs, and cloathing of the parochial poor: and they ſhould be required to lay annually before parliament, a comprehenſive report on the whole ſubject.

Were ſuch an efficient Board appointed; and due care taken, that in the nomination of its members no party or private intereſt, no ſiniſter or unworthy views, ſhould be ſuffered

fered to interfere; but that every individual officer ſhould be fitted for his office, and not the office beſtowed becauſe it was convenient for the man: ineſtimable advantages would accrue. Such light would be thrown upon the parochial ſyſtem, as would point out the moſt judicious, practicable, and efficacious meaſures, for correcting the evils which now exiſt in that ſyſtem, and ameliorating, or, "bettering the condition of the poor."

The expenſe of ſuch an eſtabliſhment has been objected to. But the general diſtribution of that expenſe, would obviate the objection.

Under a prudent and œconomical plan, a tax of half a guinea per annum upon the ſmaller pariſhes, and from a guinea and half to two guineas upon the larger, throughout the kingdom, would produce an income fully competent; and there would, in more reſpects than one, be a peculiar propriety and advantage, in thus providing for the charge that might hereby be incurred.

Upon the whole, it is abundantly evident that it would contribute greatly to the ſucceſs of any plan for the improvement of the parochial

chial ſyſtem, that it was *voluntarily* and *cordially* adopted by the parties concerned: and that they were enabled to carry it into execution, without incurring any unneceſſary or avoidable expenſe at the out-ſet. If therefore an act was paſſed to explain and amend the 22d. of Geo. the 3d. * to enlarge its proviſions, and to empower — but not to compel — pariſhes to incorporate for the better relief, maintenance, employment, and education of their poor; under ſuch judicious regulations and reſtrictions, reſpecting the allowance of occaſional relief to the poor at their own dwellings, and the government of the incorporated poor-houſe, as the wiſdom of Parliament

* The preſumed deficiencies in this Act are, that the care and management of the poor is ſtill to be veſted in *annual* officers. Their power is ſubject to the ſame limitations with that of the preſent overſeer. A ſingle *viſitor* may at any time controul their proceedings: a ſecond viſitor overturn the plan of the former; the relief of paupers remains at the diſcretion of an individual overſeer or guardian. No other deſcriptions of paupers are eligible for admiſſion but the old, ſick, and infirm; orphan children, or thoſe who go with their mothers for ſuſtenance. Idle and diſorderly perſons, together with all thoſe who claim relief on the ground of their having no employment, remain in the ſame ſituation as before, without any check to their impoſitions.

ment ſhould ſuggeſt: — I am perfectly convinced that this would be found a moſt beneficial and ſalutary meaſure; combining thoſe important objects, which all admit to be neceſſary, — a check to fraud and impoſition; the proper education of the infant poor; neceſſary relief in ſeaſons of occaſional diſtreſs; and a comfortable proviſion and aſylum for the aged and infirm.

THE END.

J. and W. Eddowes, Shrewſbury.

For an instructive Commentary on the foregoing & for the subsequent History of the Shrewsbury House of Industry see Mr Day's Report in the Second Report of the Poor Laws Commissioners 1836.
A. H. D.